

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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July 27, 2005

05TAH0015/05TAH0012

SCH# 2005052059

Burton Creek State Park

Preliminary Plan and DEIR

05PLA028 PM 1.50/1.75

Mr. Ken Anderson

California Department of Parks and Recreation

P.O. Box 266

Tahoma, CA 96142

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Burton Creek State Park Preliminary Plan and DEIR. We acknowledge your response on June 24, 2005 to our NOP comments. We look forward to working with you to assess future traffic impacts, and offer the following comments and points of clarification below:

1.10

COMMENTS

1.11

- Although the Preliminary General Plan is a part of a tiered environmental assessment process, it would be more efficient to conduct a comprehensive traffic study at this juncture to identify significant traffic impacts and necessary mitigation measures. This would allow for the identification of effective mitigation strategies and for the timely pursuit of resources for project development and construction activities, which often take many years. Furthermore, a comprehensive traffic study avoids the pitfalls of separate traffic analyses, including, for example, the efficient sequencing and planning of Park improvements and cumulative impacts. Caltrans staff is available to assist you with developing the scope of the needed traffic study.

1.12

- The Plan cites the undetermined amount of traffic as an unavoidable significant environmental effect. Such a finding is premature, given the absence of an objective traffic study and consultation with Caltrans regarding strategies to reduce impacts to State Route 28, particularly with regard to the access points to the Highway.

1.13

- On pages 7 and 29 of the DEIR, Caltrans Level of Service (LOS) goals are discussed. It is stated that Caltrans goal for LOS on State Route (SR) 28 is a LOS D. This is incorrect. The current LOS is E and the future concept for SR 28 is LOS F. Even though the concept LOS is "F", significant impacts

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to the Highway must be mitigated and appropriate facilities developed. For example, the access points to the Park will have to be constructed to State Highway standards.

1.14

- The Preliminary General Plan states that the preferred access point from SR 28 into the park would be near the Tamarack Lodge across from Star Harbor Court. Depending on the volume of traffic expected to use this access, a left-turn pocket may be required on SR 28. Subsequent environmental and traffic analyses will be needed to address park access issues.

1.15

- On page 68, the initial phase includes the development of four trailheads. Two are located at the Tahoe State Recreation Area Campground (TSRA) and one at Tamarack Lodge would require access directly to SR 28. The safest locations for access must be determined for each of these sites, and Caltrans should review any preliminary plans. The demand for parking at these trailheads should be estimated carefully, and adequate parking provided, so that overflow parking does not impact the highway. Subsequent environmental and traffic analyses will be needed to determine if highway improvements will be required concurrently with the construction of the access for these trailheads.

1.16

- Caltrans expects to begin construction of a major water quality treatment project on this segment of SR 28 within the next couple of years. If the Department of Parks and Recreation is able to identify and fund needed improvements to SR 28 and/or Burton Creek State Park in a similar time frame, we would encourage coordination between, and consideration of, project scheduling between our departments as feasible.

1.17

- The proposed park site is located immediately adjacent to and up gradient of SR 28. The existing 2000 acre site is undeveloped but has been logged out. Several non-paved (dirt) logging roads traverse the site. These roads have been greatly incised and currently serve as drainage pathways during significant rainfall and snow melt events. With high runoff flows, the site and the system of dirt roads continue to erode and contribute significant quantities of depositional material to the Burton Creek meadow and to Lake Tahoe. Efforts should be made in this project to restore natural vegetation within the park area and to establish more natural waterways within the park area to carry surface water to the various creeks within the park. The park entrance and exit road off of SR 28 should include improvements to insure that runoff being carried along the shoulder of the park access road is conveyed to the west to Burton Creek. Caltrans currently has no plan to increase Burton Creek flows beneath SR 28 at the current creek crossing (PM 1.66). Park improvements should not result in adverse hydrologic or hydraulic impacts to the State's highway Right of Way. Any cumulative impacts to Caltrans' drainage facilities arising from effects of development on surface water runoff discharge from the peak (100-year) storm event should be minimized through project drainage mitigation measures. All grading and/or drainage improvements must perpetuate, maintain or improve existing drainage pathways and may not result in adverse hydrologic or hydraulic conditions within the State's highway Right of Way or to Caltrans' drainage facilities. Means of accomplishing this, if necessary, shall be identified and backup calculations supporting this conclusion provided to our office. Please identify proposed outfall and runoff pattern in future documents.

1.18

- On page 51, the goal of having more signs on the highways to guide visitors to this park is discussed. While some directional signage to the park may be permitted along state highways, it is unlikely extensive signage will be permitted along multiple highways given the size of the park.

Mr. Ken Anderson
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POINTS OF CLARIFICATION

1.19

- It should be noted that Caltrans did not create LOS standards. The "LOS" metric was established through the Transportation Research Board, and the Levels of Service are defined in the Highway Capacity Manual. (Page 28)

1.20

- On page 29, it states that Caltrans is leading a taskforce to address traffic congestion in Tahoe City, and that improvement projects are planned for implementation in the next 5 years. While Caltrans is involved with other agencies is examining various alternatives for State Route 28 near Tahoe City, it is a significant challenge, given funding and environmental constraints, to implement major projects to reduce traffic congestion during the next several years.

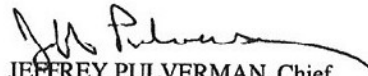
1.21

- On page 29, it states that passing is difficult on SR 28. It would be more accurate to say that passing is illegal on SR 28 between Tahoe City and Tahoe Vista.

1.22

Please provide our office with a copy of the future reports and documents, including the hydrology report and conditions of approval. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Marlo Tinney at (916) 274-0618.

Sincerely,



JEFFREY PULVERMAN, Chief
Office of Transportation Planning and Mass Transportation

Cc: State Clearinghouse

Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California Environmental Protection Department



July 31, 2005

California State Parks and Recreation
Sierra District
Mr. Ken Anderson
P.O. Box 266
Tahoma, CA 96142

Dear California State Parks and Recreation:

Subject: Burton Creek State Park Preliminary General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report

2.10

Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on the Burton Creek State Park Preliminary General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report. The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California's Environmental Protection Department has the following comments to offer on the Plan.

2.11

The Washoe people have occupied over 1.5 million acres surrounding the Lake Tahoe Basin area for over 10 thousand years and Lake Tahoe is the center of their aboriginal territory and is to this day considered a sacred place. The Burton Creek area and meadow complex was utilized and managed by the Washoe for thousands of years prior to European contact the area was known for its rich natural resources which supplied food for the Washoe throughout the year. There is a Washoe name for every tributary that enters into Lake Tahoe and different families occupied areas surrounding the Lake. The focus of these comments are mainly related to natural resources, but keep in mind that natural and cultural resources to Washoe are one in the same. The Washoe Archival Coordinator, William Dancing Feather or the Cultural Committee should be consulted regarding cultural resources.

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1. The California Code of Regulations §4332. Preparation of General Plan. States:

2.12

"After classification or reclassification of a unit, the Department shall obtain public comment and prepare a general plan. The general plan shall consist of a resource element, a land use element, a facilities element, and an operations element. In order that it shall act as a guide and constraint, the resource element will be prepared, made available for public comment, and approved by the Director before substantial work is done on the other elements of the plan."

Where is the signed Resource Element for Burton Creek State Park?

2.13

2. Pg 6. Why should a local high school need access through a State Park? The State Department of Education requires access prior to the establishment of a school.

2.14

3. Pg 7. Does California State Parks and Recreation really mean that they may only have one site in a campground? 50 to 200 are more realistic than 1-200! How was carrying capacity and attendance limits established over such a wide range? California Public Resources Code Sec. 5001.96. states: "Attendance at state park system units shall be held within limits established by carrying capacity determined in accordance with Section 5019.5." Section 5019.5 states: Before any park or recreational area developmental plan is made, the department shall cause to be made a land carrying capacity survey of the proposed park or recreational area, including in such survey such factors as soil, moisture, and natural cover. Where is this survey? It is not referred to in the literature cited section. Neither is the original "Burton Creek Inventory of Features" that was required for classification.

2.15

2.16

4. Pg 8. Boundary adjustment - Why is a portion of the Burton Creek Natural Preserve being eliminated for roads and facilities? Has this area lost its "natural value" or is this for convince of the developments? The Alternative campground site would not compromise the natural preserve. "Technically, natural preserves should not have roads in them" - is not correct. Legally natural preserves shall not have roads in them. Please refer to California Public Resources Code Sec. 5001.8. (a) "The use of motor vehicles in units of the state park system is subject to the following limitations: (1) In state wildernesses, natural preserves, and cultural preserves, use is prohibited." That includes park vehicles.

2.17

5. Pg. 31. As described in the Plan the majority of the park visitors are residents who would like to see the area maintained as undisturbed as possible. Additional facilities, trails, and roads will impact the scenic and natural value of the area. There will be unavoidable negative impacts to wetlands including the meadows and riparian corridors if the area is

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developed. The potential impact to the water quality of Lake Tahoe by non point sources from the proposed Plan is great. Shouldn't the Department be protecting the area not impacting the area?

2.18

6. Pg 40. Development of a forest management plan - Stack and burn causes destructive alteration of soil structure and destroys native seed reserves found naturally in the soil; it also leaves the perimeter of these intense burns susceptible to alien weedy taxa invasions. This is not a recommended practice! Scattering of downed fuels in forest openings would be more appropriate.

2.19

"Broadcast burning" should be replaced with "prescribed burning". Chipping has two known problems - it decreases the pH of the soil and it smolder burns during wild or prescribed fire.

2.20

No mention of a meadow management plan? Frequent fire is essential to perpetuation of meadows. Seeds of native grasses and other forbs were harvested by the Washoe; meadows were burned after harvest. This practice probably occurred for thousands of years. Meadows were thus not encroached upon by surrounding forest ecosystems.

2.21

7. Pg.46. Fire Management Goals - this should be based on more than "historic information" Fire chronologies have been worked out for the Tahoe Basin - i.e. Scott Stephens (UCB) work. See: Stephens, S.L., Meixner, T., Poth, M., McGurk, B, Payne, D. 2004. Prescribed fire, soils, and stream water chemistry in a watershed in the Lake Tahoe Basin. International Journal of Wildland Fire 13: 27-35.

2.22

8. Wildlife surveys have identified Northern Goshawk nests within and adjacent to the Park boundaries.

2.23

9. The potential administrative building site is located within the Burton Creek Reserve area and is in the middle of two riparian corridors and would impact the integrity of the SEZ. It is recommended that development be outside of riparian and meadow areas. The potential location would impact the tributaries, meadows, riparian corridors, and the Lake.

2.24

10. There are a few unique forest stands in the Park that have only recently started to make a comeback since the logging era. It is recommended that these stands be protected to the fullest extent possible for future generations to enjoy.

2.25

11. It is recommended if this plan is implemented that any ground disturbance should have a Washoe monitor on site along with the department's archeologist in order to protect cultural and historical resources that will be disturbed.

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2.26

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Burton Creek State Park Preliminary General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report. If you have any questions or need clarification on the comments provided please feel free to contact me at your convenience at (775) 265-8682 or via email at marie.barry@washoetribe.us. William Dancing Feather, Archival Coordinator can be reached at (775) 888-0936 and can also set up a meeting with the Cultural Committee if needed.

Sincerely,

Marie Barry

Environmental Director

cc: A. Brian Wallace, Chairman

Tim Seward, General Counsel

William Dancing Feather, Cultural Archives Coordinator

Lynda Shoshone, Cultural Committee

WEPD file



July 29, 2005

Serving our members • Serving our community

Ken Anderson
Sierra District
California Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 266
Tahoma, CA 96142-0266

Re: Burton Creek State Park Draft General Plan

Dear Ken,

The North Lake Tahoe Resort Association would like to express our support for the approach that has been taken to draft a successful General Plan for Burton Creek State Park. The Park-Wide Goals and Guidelines appear to be well thought-out and have provided a solid basis on which to develop the preferred alternative.

3.10

As you know, the Resort Association has recently completed a broad based effort to develop the *North Lake Tahoe Tourism and Community Investment Master Plan* as a guiding document for the cooperative efforts necessary to achieve economic and environmental sustainability and community improvement. Our goal, much as is yours, is to ensure the long-term enhancement of our natural and human environment, and historical and cultural heritage. The results will provide an improved visitor experience and quality of life for residents in the North Lake Tahoe area. We believe the goals of the BCSP General Plan and our Master Plan do compliment each other and allow for working together to achieve them.

3.11

Specific proposals that we would like to see expanded or further referenced in the General Plan, and have you consider working with the Resort Association to accomplish are parking, transit, visitor information, and signage. Parking and convenient transit opportunities have always been in short supply in the Tahoe City area. While we are continuing to improve parking and transit, it is very important that this need be strongly stated as a part of all new visitor serving proposals. Information is also a very important part of the visitor experience, and all of us providing such should do so in concert, enabling the visitors to receive what they need to know about the area at any one of our information facilities.

3.12

We would like to suggest you incorporate more language in your description of the opportunities at the trailhead to be located across Highway 28 from the Tahoe State Recreation Area Campground where BCSP touches the eastern edge of Tahoe City. We agree that this area will be the most popular trailhead allowing access into BCSP, and could provide multi-benefits to visitors and residents utilizing the State Park, Tahoe State Recreation Area, and Tahoe City. There is the opportunity in this location to provide a major parking area which will serve this trailhead without taxing surrounding

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3.13

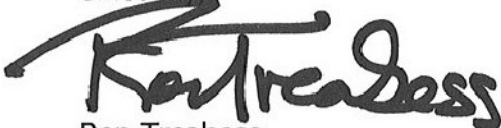
3.13 limited parking, and will serve Tahoe City. It will allow an easy interface with the Tahoe City Trolley and other transit vehicles that could provide access to other trailheads and, perhaps, to the proposed campground. There might be the opportunity to consider "trolley access" camping and reduced auto camping. Regardless, a free trolley to and from the campground, other trailheads and Tahoe City would reduce auto trips, having a positive impact on the traffic congestion along Highway 28. Additionally, a visitor information center located here would be key to allowing visitors to learn of the opportunities of BCSP, other State Parks, and Tahoe City/North Shore. As this proposal is consistent with many findings and recommendations in our Master Plan, the Resort Association could consider a request to help fund the planning and environmental analysis, as well as solicit funding partners for bringing the proposal to fruition.

3.14

3.14 The Resort Association and other local entities are beginning to do planning for a wayfinding signage program to improve and coordinate directional signage along the Northshore of Lake Tahoe. The purpose of this program is to accomplish the type of needs you are calling for under Park Wide Goals for Circulation. A stronger reference in the General Plan to this on-going program and the need to coordinate with it, would ensure that States Parks is working with the local community and could lead to BCSP being able to share in some of the funding this program might receive.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this Draft General Plan, and have done so to the extent that our two missions relate to one another. We look forward to the approval of this Plan which will allow certain needs of BCSP to start being met. We realize that Burton Creek State Park is very important not just to North Lake Tahoe, but to the entire California State Parks system. With that in mind, we thank you for carefully considering the effect BCSP will have on the surrounding area.

Sincerely,



Ron Treabess

Director, Community Partnerships and Planning
(530)581-8735; (530)581-8780 (fax)
ron@puretahoenorth.com

July 26, 2005

To: Ken Anderson

Re: Burton Creek/Dollar properties

I appreciate that our state park system is inviting input, and hope this leads to trying new approaches in combining recreation with natural environment. A unique opportunity opens up if goals of the Forest Service, the State Park, and Firestone properties unite in certain projects. The Firestone is the only remaining sizeable undeveloped property that fronts the highway for a 30-mile stretch of the lake's north shore. And the Burton Creek/Dollar properties are the only areas that can link the Firestone's adjacent black-top civilization with the upper-basin's forested wilderness. To err in decision-making regarding this park's highly-desirable position will be viewed by succeeding generations as an irreparable loss.

My credentials: I have tent-camped for months...or overnight as a city-escape. I have been a mountaineer, rock-climber, back-packer, and day-trip hiker. I view the outdoors as another home, know my limits, and find that non-structured recreation balances the structure civilization places us in. While teaching in the public schools I introduced inner-city kids to the out-of-doors, and while teaching skiing for 35 years I helped adult "couch-potato" beginners overcome their fear of inadequacy and of an alien environment. (Many have later become staunch supporters of our state and national parks, and of protecting the environment.)

My viewpoint: To experience is the key. We gain re-creation by going back to our native heritage. The problem is that we don't know what we have missed until we experience it. An uneducated consensus of what recreation is cannot mend this. Rather than pandering to human misconceptions, public agencies must help educate the public—and that includes setting certain limits.

My suggestions: Ski areas don't encourage beginners to hop on the highest lift. Newcomers to the sport are helped in choosing proper clothing and equipment. They are encouraged to take lessons that start on the "civilized" flats and gradually reach "native" heights. Burton Creek State Park is located in an ideal situation for creating a summer school for "beginning" and "intermediate" hikers and bikers and tent-campers, encouraging increasingly high explorations, and luring persons onto trails that branch out above the park—far from their cars and civilization. (To avoid overcrowding our parks we must spread more of our growing population into these "outer" areas.) Since the current proposed plan for Burton Creek awaits traffic mitigation, this is an ideal time to experiment with new (and less expensive) recreational uses. As starters:

Help solve the traffic problem. If possible, eliminate all the proposed trailheads. (To provide on-site parking only increases our car-enslaved populace.) The Tahoe Trolley/TART bus system provides speedy access to both Tamarack and Dollar Hill.

And people will use it if it's the only vehicle that can take them where they want to go. (The only exception would be for ADA parking.) The short bus trip would introduce visitors to a means of travel around the lake that aids relaxation and lessens traffic. A "guided hike" might start in the bus—which would also advertise the park's services to other bus occupants.

4.11

Hold a variety of talks and guided short hikes—including speakers who may be local businessmen or knowledgeable in specific fields...eg: How to survive without a car nearby: What day-pack to choose, and what to supply it with—covering needs of various ages and family situations. What clothes to choose (especially footwear.) Join a park naturalist or an artist or musician or experienced hiker, etc. as the teacher/guide who makes the hike an "experience" rather than a lecture. (Each contributes a different viewpoint—important since we differ in how we learn.)

Expand the length of hikes to all-day, or evening/night experiences, which can tune the participants into handling changes in temperature and use of their senses in varying environmental situations. Lessons can include how to put out a minor fire in forested land, first aid, and how to protect oneself or one's family from various dangers (human, animal, or environmental.) Discussions encourage participants to compare this new environment with that of their usual one.

4.12

Establish area(s) for tent-campers only—NO vehicles, thus the campers pack in their gear (or hire a service-employee to do this.) Camping can include lessons that focus on the information needed by potential back-packers. Ideally, a variety of tents and equipment would not only be displayed, but could be rented for a short stay. Classes would cover all aspects—from camp-cooking to sleeping bag comfort to which pack fits which person and purpose. Over-night campers would have star-gazing sessions—or follow paths without a flashlight, etc. Naturalists can teach the campers about native animals and the night-environment's sounds. (That persons can experience the quiet and solitude of isolated areas, yet be close to town, is a learning experience that most campgrounds cannot provide.)

4.13

Set up pre-registered programs for special interest groups (which would include limited-group camping—and NO vehicles)...eg: Mountain-biking for novices, painting outdoors under an artist's guidance, classes for dancers, students in scientific fields, teen-age challenges, gourmet camp-cookery, family-camping for those with pre-school children, for seniors, for the disabled, etc. Specialized concessions may offer the designated courses.

Other insights: Tahoe City locals expected that the state would honor keeping this property only for day use. Many persons aren't yet aware of what changes might ensue—if only because no worker can keep up with the multiple meetings of the 25 or so agencies and groups that govern our area. That "not in my back yard" is a common complaint does not make it invalid. This undeveloped area lies between 3 large subdivisions—the most compacted area near Tahoe City—and the necessity of preserving nearby green-belt areas like Burton/Dollar is also being

4.14

recognized by land planners throughout the country. Locals fear having vehicle-campers (let alone RV's) near homes and the high school—since they increase the danger of fire, of robbery and sex-crimes, and endanger the nearby bears and other wild animals. There is no way that the state park can ensure safety for any of us settlers. (However, persons who tent-camp are usually a breed that reveres the environment, and would probably be accepted by their neighbors.)

4.15

The Tahoe Basin is too valuable to remain a one-day trip for the masses that view the scene without developing a kinship with it. I spent several years in attending meetings held by many agencies (plus local and county special-interest groups.) ALL of them mentioned the need for visitor education, yet little originality in planning this has emerged. The state park administration can lead the way for other locales, and also contribute to this community's welfare. To have the Burton Creek State Park initiate an educational program for its visitors provides a focal point that sparks cooperation—and aids the local economy. (Those attending classes will purchase clothes and equipment from locals whose expertise they now trust.) To stimulate non-structured recreation is unique, and can build business during skiing's off-season. And, like ski-areas, a summer school can start small.

A Firestone and Dollar property coalition is important. The Firestone provides an easily-reached panoramic view—ideal for families with babies, the elderly, and for meeting ADA needs. Parts of both properties have been damaged, yet may bridge the gap between what visitors can and can't "touch"—as outlined in a recently-published book, "Last Child in the Woods" (by Richard Louv). This book is receiving nation-wide attention. It details ideas for children's parks and greenbelt areas, and creates insights in planning recreation for everyone.

Thank you for your attention. I have been thinking about—and testing—environmental education possibilities for many years, and will be happy to discuss these points if you or any member of the planning board wishes.



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